

In testimony at listening sessions in Chicago December 8, I stressed the need for a national initiative on Aging in Place. Following are additional thoughts on this proposed initiative:

1. Not only do many older adults need help now to rehab their homes so they don't have to move into nursing homes, but we must persuade home builders, architects, developers and others to start building homes that people can "age" in ... homes either without stairs or stairways wide enough to accommodate chair lifts, kitchens where older adults can navigate, wider doors, etc.
2. We need to stress the need for neighborhoods that are seniors-friendly, where services are readily accessible. Recently the Downtown Development Commission in Peoria gave a lengthy report to the City Council about downtown needs. Over and over, they stressed the needs and wants of young professionals. Older adults were never mentioned. We need to reach governmental bodies and let them know that needs and wants of older adults both now and in the future are just as important, especially with the aging population.
3. Local business leaders overlook the potential of older adults as contributors and entrepreneurs in their community. We need to reach the business community about entrepreneurship among older adults.
4. Communities in most of the nation will benefit as older adults "age in place" rather than taking their assets to the Sun Belt. But that means communities must do a better job of making their communities more desirable by older adults. Communities spend millions, perhaps billions, to attract businesses, but ignore the potential of keeping and attracting seniors to their communities.

For all these reasons, we need a national initiative that will create awareness among a huge audience – community leaders, governmental officials, architects, developers, business leaders, and others. This will take a massive amount of communication at all levels.